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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

# *WEEKLY SUMMARY*

## *Special Report*

*Force Reductions in Europe*

**Secret**

№ 42

2 February 1973
No. 0355/73A

# FORCE REDUCTIONS IN EUROPE

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On 31 January, delegations from NATO and Warsaw Pact nations met in Vienna to begin what promises to be a lengthy and complex process of negotiating mutual force reductions in Europe. The initial talks will deal primarily with the agenda and procedures for the negotiations—scheduled to begin next fall. The eleventh-hour flurry of diplomatic activity, which at first appeared to threaten the talks, changed the anticipated site and raised questions about who would participate. It did not change the objectives of the participants on either side, and in the end, reflected the determination of both East and West to get the show on the road.

Promoted by the West for over four years, in part as a response to Soviet calls for a European security conference, the force reduction talks are a gamble for all concerned. Along with preparations for the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, West German Ostpolitik, the Berlin accords, and the SALT talks, the force reduction talks offer an opportunity to expand East-West detente. At the same time, they will test the capacity of the Western allies to hold together while negotiating vital security matters with the East. The approach of the preparatory talks revealed a potential for serious misunderstandings between the US and its allies over the role of the alliance and what the initial bargaining should achieve. For the East, the talks are a unique venture into what is essentially a bloc-to-bloc negotiation. As such, it could be a serious test of the Warsaw Pact's own flexibility and cohesion.

### The Road to Negotiations

Moscow once held the initiative on force reduction proposals. The Soviets promoted troop cuts in Europe as a diplomatic tactic in the 1950s. By 1965, however, they had dropped the issue, partly because they hoped for unilateral US reductions and partly because they feared an accusation, particularly from the Chinese, that an agreement would enable the US to shift troops to Vietnam.

NATO picked up the idea in 1967 when the Western allies decided to use the alliance to promote East-West detente. In that year, the allies approved the Harmel Report, which recommended that NATO work toward a "just and lasting peace" in Europe. Tactically, the invitation to the East to talk about mutual and balanced force reductions was first formally issued in June 1968 in response to Soviet proposals for a European security conference.

Moscow did not reply to the NATO invitation and the security conference campaign was temporarily subordinated to Soviet preoccupation with Czechoslovakia. In at least one respect, Moscow's apparent indifference was advantageous. Even at this early date, some allies had misgivings about the whole idea, but these doubts did not surface so long as the Soviets were silent.

The Western allies—with the exception of France—repeated the invitation twice in 1969, and the NATO staff began work on various force reduction schemes. These were intended to serve as a basis for NATO consideration of whether an approach that would preserve allied security would also be negotiable. The exercise revealed how difficult it might be to harmonize these requirements, and it made the allies even more aware of the problems they would encounter if the Soviets took up the NATO invitation.

Meeting in Rome in May 1970, the NATO foreign ministers reiterated their interest in exploratory talks on force reductions, but they laid down four basic considerations. Known as the Rome Criteria, the four points became the basis for public exposition of NATO's position. They papered over deep differences within the alliance and no longer reflect the positions of all the allies.

The next month, the Warsaw Pact responded to the NATO invitation, indicating an interest in a dialogue on force reductions. Moscow and its allies, however, carefully linked any such talks to the Soviet proposal for a security conference and specified that they should be concerned with "reducing foreign armed forces on the territory of European states."

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This response was viewed with skepticism in NATO. Many allies suspected that it mainly reflected Moscow's concern for its international image, and the tie-in with a security conference led them to question whether the Soviets were serious. The allies, nevertheless, concluded that they could not afford to treat the offer lightly. In December 1970, they announced a readiness to explore the possibility of reductions in stationed (i.e., foreign) forces if the reductions were "part of an integral program for the reduction of both stationed and indigenous forces."

The issue lay dormant until Brezhnev raised the subject of troop limitations in "Central Europe" as part of the "peace plan" he unveiled at the 24th Party Congress in March 1971. This renewal of Soviet interest caught the allies off guard. Many of them still saw the proposals as a useful tactical device to fend off pressures for unilateral US troop cuts. They had neither fully appraised the potential risks and advantages of force reductions nor developed any firm ideas on how the cuts could be accomplished. The European allies were also perceptibly disturbed by the specter of a bilateral dialogue on troop cuts between Washington and Moscow.

At least in part to buy time and to ward off direct US-Soviet dealings, NATO agreed in October 1971 to ask former secretary general Brosio to explore Soviet views. The Soviets, however, failed to invite Brosio to Moscow, and by the spring of 1972, most of the allies recognized that the gambit had failed. Despite their concern about the bilateral avenue, they reluctantly accepted the idea that President Nixon's then-pending meeting with Brezhnev would offer an opportunity to find out how the Soviets proposed to move the subject off dead center.

This in fact proved to be the case. While the President was in Moscow, the Soviets hoped to get a US commitment to begin preparations for a conference on security and cooperation in Europe. The Berlin agreement was ready for signature, thus removing the explicit pre-condition that NATO had posed for the beginning of conference preparations. In return for a US pledge to begin these preparatory talks, Moscow agreed that force reduction talks could begin as well.

**DELEGATIONS OPENING TALKS**

| West | East |
|---|---|
| United States | Soviet Union |
| Canada | East Germany |
| Great Britain | Poland |
| West Germany | Czechoslovakia |
| The Netherlands | Hungary |
| Belgium | |
| Luxembourg | |
| Norway* | Romania* |
| Denmark* | Bulgaria* |
| Italy* | |
| Greece* | |
| Turkey* | |

** These states, without forces or territory in the reduction zone desired by the West, may revert to observer status.*

Last September, when Dr. Kissinger followed up the summit with another trip to Moscow, the Soviets suggested a schedule for both security conference preparations and force reduction talks. They proposed that preparations for a security conference begin in November 1972, with the conference itself opening in June 1973; initial force reduction talks would open in January 1973 with negotiations starting in September or October 1973. The Soviets specified that the initial force reduction talks should deal only with the agenda and procedures for the talks themselves.

The NATO allies subsequently invited the Soviet Union, Poland, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary to meet in Geneva for a preparatory conference substantially along the lines Moscow had proposed. The pact states did not respond immediately, apparently in part

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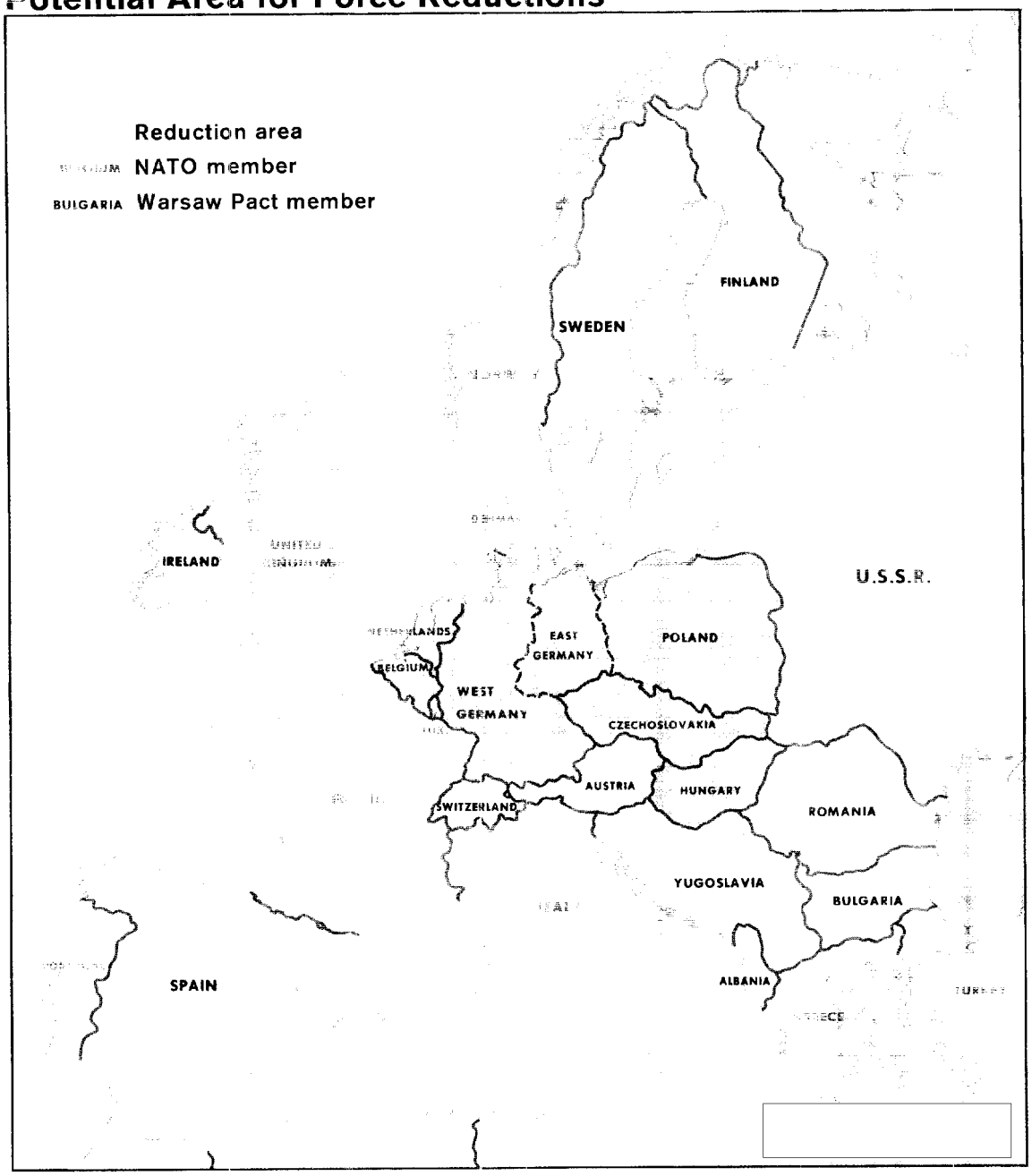
## Potential Area for Force Reductions

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because of Romanian insistence that it and all other interested states participate in the talks.

The Romanian position was accommodated in a reply approved by the Warsaw Pact foreign ministers in Moscow on 15-16 January. The reply, although essentially positive, set off a flurry of diplomatic activity that indicated how complex these negotiations will be. The East agreed that the talks could begin on 31 January, but suggested that they be held in Vienna and be open to "all interested states" in Europe plus the United States and Canada.

Most of the NATO allies thought that Moscow should be held to its agreement to open the talks on 31 January, but felt strongly that the initial Western response should stick with Geneva and against broadening participation. They were suspicious that the Soviet proposals were intended to undermine the negotiations. The Western reply that emerged from very difficult NATO consultations reiterated a preference for Geneva but did not rule Vienna out. The allies suggested that participation could be discussed during the initial talks, but advised against accepting the Soviet suggestion about "all interested states."

The Pact states, in turn, said that they would show up in Vienna and that Romania and Bulgaria—not included in the original Western invitation—would be coming. Moscow did not press its suggestion that "all interested states," including neutrals, be invited. The Soviets reserved the right to raise the matter later, reiterating their position that neutrals who so desire should eventually participate. The West accepted this modus vivendi in order to get the talks started.

### Moscow's Position

While the Warsaw Pact replies accorded with Romania's position and reflected Soviet sensitivity to Bucharest's arguments that force reduction talks should not be on a bloc-to-bloc basis, several additional factors probably influenced the proposal for broader participation. It is doubtful that it was intended to renege on the commitment to begin talks on 31 January. Annoyed by the slow pace of security conference preparations, however, the Soviets may have hoped to delay force reduction talks so that they would not get ahead of the discussions in Helsinki. Moscow's desire to offer wider talks on force reductions as a substitute for a prolonged debate over military matters at the security conference preparatory talks may also have been a consideration. Such a debate could jeopardize Moscow's hope for an early conclusion in Helsinki. Moscow probably also calculated that the response would score points with the neutrals and with the French, whose participation they particularly hope to encourage.

In their notes and subsequent comments, the Warsaw Pact representatives drew a clear distinction between participation in the preliminary talks and in the actual negotiations. They suggested that preliminary talks with broad participation would provide an umbrella under which regional groups could negotiate reductions in specific areas. This approach is in line with recent Romanian statements that they want no part, even as an observer, in negotiations on force reductions in Central Europe. They do want to be included in any wider forum that provides a framework for regional negotiations and in any group formed to discuss reductions in the Balkans. Their position has overtones of a Soviet-Romanian understanding, although there is no evidence that a formal agreement has been reached. Such an understanding would have elements pleasing to both Bucharest and Moscow. The Romanians would be included in the broad forum that would endorse force reductions and improve chances of holding the Balkan conference they have long sought. The Soviets would be free to conduct negotiations on Central Europe without the threat of Romanian interference.

Moscow's real attitude toward force reductions as such may not emerge until well after the actual negotiations are under way. Its periodic positive references and its eventual agreement to discuss reductions were probably intended primarily to persuade the West to begin preparations for the security conference.

On one hand, talks on force reduction may have some real attractions for Moscow. They

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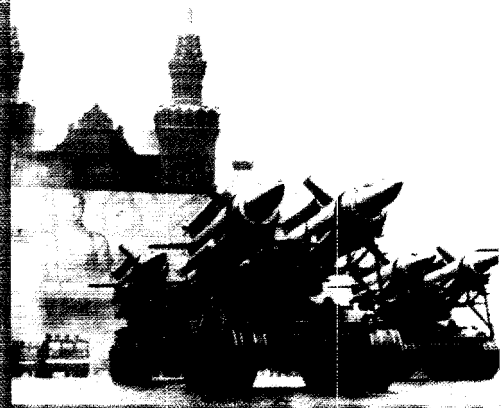
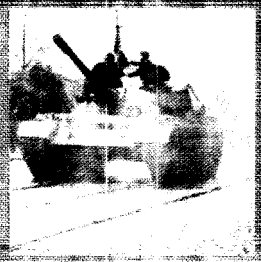
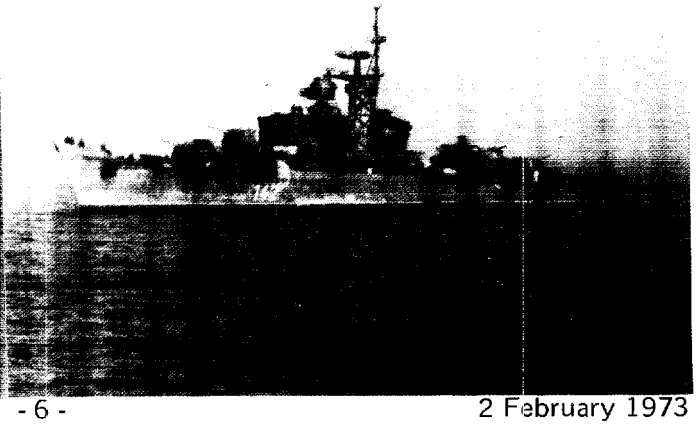
WARSAW PACT FORCES







complement the detente policy Brezhnev has espoused. Negotiations leading to reductions could also relieve pressure on Moscow's western flank at a time when relations with Peking remain severely strained. The Soviets may believe that negotiations will weaken NATO and even contribute to its disarray. On the other hand, the talks entail certain risks. In particular, there is the danger that reductions, or even negotiations on them, will loosen the Soviet hold on Eastern Europe. There is also a possibility that unilateral US troop withdrawals, which might have occurred if the Soviets had only waited, will now become conditional on Soviet withdrawals.

While the Soviets acknowledge that they have studied force reductions, they have done considerably less homework than has been done in the West. This, in addition to the skepticism of some Soviet officials, may account for Moscow's desire to limit the initial talks to agenda and procedural matters. The security conference preparatory talks have shown, however, that it is difficult to discuss agendas without getting into substance.

Most Soviet statements on force reductions have been couched in generalities. The one Soviet scholar who has dealt with the subject in depth has stressed its complexity, thus implying that only a simple approach can succeed. In particular, he considers it virtually impossible to work out a "mixed package"—i.e., an agreement weighing tanks against aircraft. The Soviets also reject any inference that they enjoy over-all superiority to the NATO forces and for this reason strongly oppose the Western concept of "balance." They are, therefore, likely to prefer only small percentage reductions—possibly beginning with US and Soviet forces—and verification by national means.

Except for Romania, the East European countries have not recently expressed independent views. They are presumably interested in some mutual force reductions, but have no wish to get out ahead of Moscow. Although they may differ with the Soviets on certain aspects of force reductions, it is unlikely that these differences will emerge during the initial talks.

**The NATO Hassle...**

The NATO consultations of the last three months have underlined the importance the allies attach to the forthcoming negotiations and have demonstrated their intention jealously to protect their political and military interests. Since Dr. Kissinger's trip to Moscow, they have become even more nervous about what they see as growing US-Soviet control of the negotiations. They have maneuvered to reassert their influence, and, as if to insulate themselves from perceived ill-effects of the negotiations, they have urged a cautious approach.

**...On Procedures**

The way in which any reductions are negotiated is vitally important to the allies, who think that the process itself could either cement or crack the bonds that hold NATO together. Almost all believe that their interests are at stake, and the smaller states, in particular, have fought to ensure that the bargaining process remains an alliance affair.

One of the initial skirmishes was fought over who should participate directly in the negotiations. The US preferred that only those Western allies whose forces or territory are involved be represented—the US, UK, Canada, West Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg. (France will be included if Paris decides to participate.) The three states on the southern flank—Italy, Greece, and Turkey—felt strongly that they also had a direct interest. Although they have argued that Soviet forces withdrawn from Central Europe might be deployed to the flanks, their basic concern was that they not be on the outside looking in on negotiations of general importance to Western security.

Most of the other allies sympathized with these concerns, and a delicate compromise was reached last October. The Western negotiating team would include two representatives of the NATO flanks: one slot rotating among Italy, Greece, and Turkey; the other shared by Denmark and Norway. The observer countries would

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have the right to speak, but only by invitation and only on issues that directly affect them. Broadening the talks in the way suggested by Moscow would undo this agreement, since the flank allies would want a role equal to that of any other state that does not have territory or forces involved.

At the time, solution of the participation problem in NATO helped to cool a related dispute over the connection between force reduction talks and the conference on security and cooperation. The US—as well as the Soviet Union and France—wanted to keep the two negotiations completely separate, believing the security conference too unwieldy a forum for discussing the complicated issue of force reductions. A number of smaller allies, led by the Belgians, wanted to link the two and suggested a variety of possible ways to do so. These included proposals to set up a committee subordinate to the security conference to consider force reductions or to have the conference itself negotiate force reduction principles or stringent constraints on troop movements and dispositions.

The preference among the smaller allies for a strong linkage was inspired by a number of considerations. They argued that a "security" conference should have something to do with military security. They also thought that a tie to a conference Moscow obviously wants to succeed would give the West some leverage on one about which Moscow did not seem enthusiastic. Most important, they saw linkage as another way of influencing the conduct and outcome of force reduction talks.

When the US agreed to participation by the flank states, much of the earlier interest in linkage dissipated. The Soviet proposal to open force reduction talks to all interested states has had the unintended effect of increasing support for dealing with broad military issues at the security conference. Most neutral and nonaligned states now think that any general discussion of force reduction issues might as well take place at the security conference while actual troop cuts are negotiated in a separate forum. A number of the smaller NATO allies agree.

Canada and the European allies, supported by Secretary General Luns and the NATO international staff, have fought long and hard for maximum formal alliance control over the negotiations. The debate has focused principally on the respective roles of the North Atlantic Council—the normal forum for NATO political consultations—and of the ad hoc group to be established at the negotiating site. Luns suggested that the council "consult and decide on all essential questions" for the talks and that the ad hoc group provide day-to-day coordination of Western positions agreed by the council.

The US countered with suggestions that a number of allies strongly opposed on the grounds that the suggestions would too narrowly limit the roles of both the council and the ad hoc group. The smaller allies were particularly upset. Although the British and West Germans supported the arguments of the smaller states, they also tried to increase their direct influence on US decisions by suggesting that Washington, London, and Bonn carefully coordinate their positions on force reductions prior to council consideration.

For the moment, this question has been submerged in terminology that in effect allows both the US and the allies to follow their own preferences once talks begin. The allies will continue in any case to urge that they have every opportunity to preview and criticize US positions for the initial talks or for the negotiations themselves.

Prior to Dr. Kissinger's trip to Moscow, the allies had assumed that initial force reduction talks would be sufficiently substantive to determine whether full-blown negotiations might succeed. The schedule Moscow suggested to Dr. Kissinger would have the security conference and force reduction talks follow in sequence rather than parallel as the allies had desired. The allies were willing to swallow this as long as the initial talks would explore some of the real issues. Moscow, however, stipulated that the initial force reduction talks cover only agenda and procedures, and US acquiescence heightened allied concerns about US-Soviet bilateralism.

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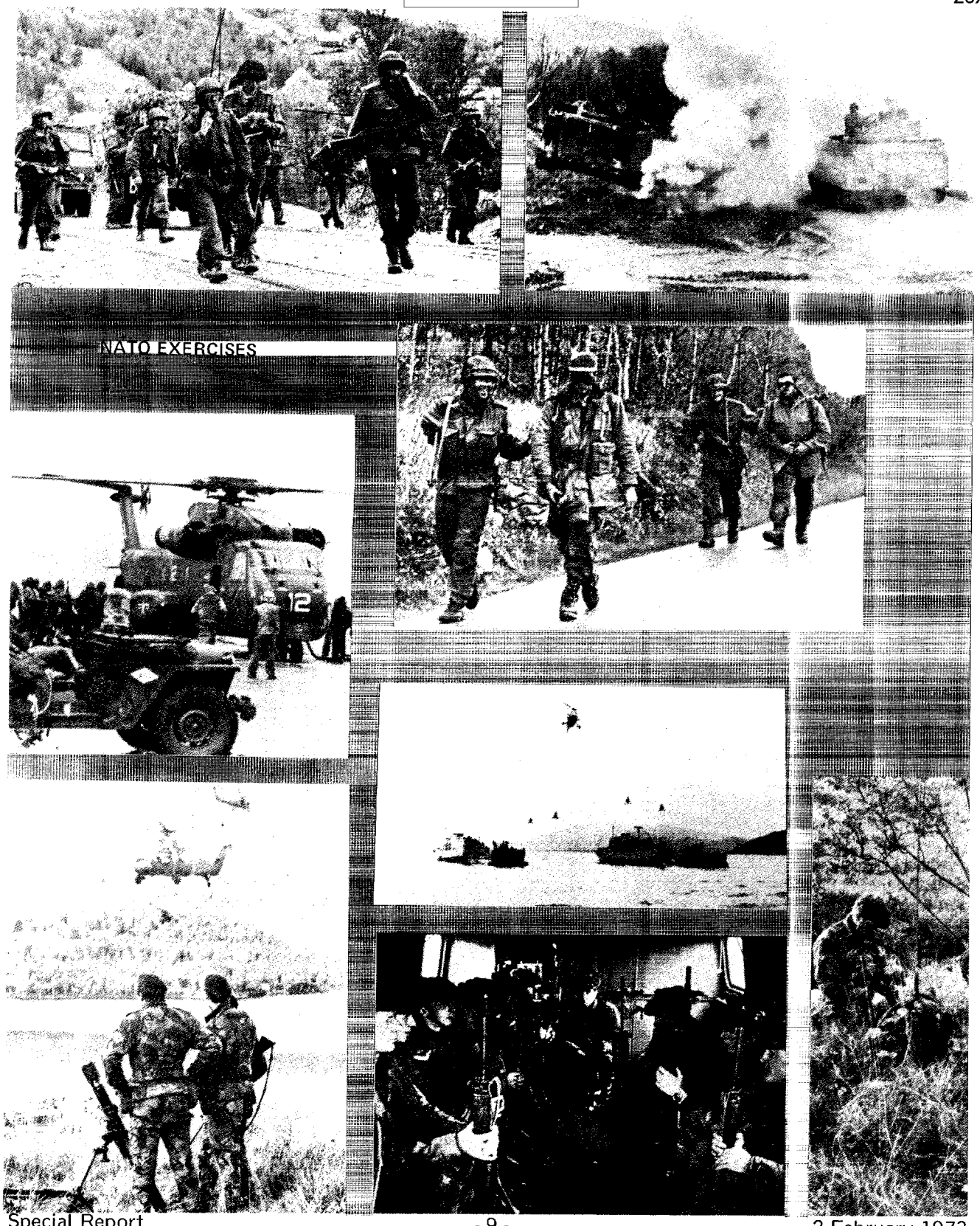

The US has since maintained that consideration of substantive matters in the initial talks might jeopardize Moscow's commitment to begin negotiations next fall, but a number of the allies have remained unconvinced. Early last December a few of them verged on pressing NATO to update the mandate prepared for the abortive Brosio mission. Although neither London nor Bonn were very sympathetic to the US case, they accepted that there was not enough time to prepare elaborate allied negotiating positions before the talks opened. As an alternative, they jointly drafted a confidential "guidelines" paper and presented it to NATO. The paper, as it emerged from difficult coordination in NATO, avoids setting substantive preconditions that the Eastern side would have to accept before the negotiations could begin. Allied endeavors to reintroduce more substance into the Western position are likely to continue.

Both the UK and West Germany have supported the view that during the initial talks individual allies should be able to raise various force reduction principles and elicit Soviet reactions. The British even said that they would not feel bound to limit their remarks during the talks to minimal NATO positions and would reserve the right to express, for example, their preference for a cautiously phased, integral approach to reductions. The allies accept the need for as few divergences as possible in their presentations at the talks, but some divergences appear inevitable.

### ...On Substance

Although the allies are still far from agreement on how an acceptable troop reduction accord with the East might look, a consensus is emerging on at least two features. Most of the allies would prefer a phased, integral program. This would mean a lengthy timetable, with "principles" negotiated first, followed by agreement on collateral constraints, such as exchanges of observers and advance notification of troop movements. Actual reductions would come only at the end of this process.

The phasing idea, the brainchild of the West Germans, has now been accepted by most of the allies. The British have defended the concept as fervently as if it were their own, because its inherent caution very well suits their skepticism about the wisdom of any Western reductions.

The allies think the phased approach has several virtues. They see initial negotiation of principles and constraints as a way to test Soviet intentions before any troop cuts are made. The West Europeans also assign a higher priority to constraints than does the US. They think that such measures in and of themselves would provide more security at a lesser cost than would actual force reductions. Negotiation of constraints before reductions, they feel, would give them a role in the verification of any reduction accord. They also see the phased approach as a way of delaying the cuts for as long as five years, which would give Western Europe time to consider the actions that may be required to offset US force withdrawals.

A consensus seems to be developing among the major allies in favor of limiting initial reductions to US and Soviet forces—a preference the US shares. This inclination first began to emerge at last month's NATO ministerial meetings when French Foreign Minister Schumann—departing from France's usual detached opposition to reductions in any form—stated that cuts confined to US and Soviet forces might be compatible with Western security. Italian Foreign Minister Medici agreed. The British and Canadians also prefer this approach. Although West Germany has in the past insisted on the inclusion of indigenous forces—and the Defense Ministry in Bonn still prefers it—foreign office officials have been trying to convince Chancellor Brandt to change this position.

This trend suggests that the larger allies are beginning to think more seriously about how to meet their own longer term defense needs. All face domestic pressures to reduce defense spending and, until recently, many have wanted to share in any force reductions. US-Soviet detente and the enlargement of the European Communities, however, are forcing them to look farther into the future. Now that force reduction talks

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*"Personally, I think and believe that it is right, that armaments should be reduced a little, even if only a little. It would be good to reduce forces. That would signify confidence of one country in another. But it is not so simple. One cannot solve everything in an hour and then drink French cognac."*

**Brezhnev's comments to press in Minsk while awaiting arrival of French President Pompidou**

are imminent, the allies appear more willing to live with lower levels of US conventional forces in Western Europe in return for reductions in Soviet forces in Eastern Europe. They do not want force reduction negotiations to encourage an epidemic of defense cuts among the smaller allies or to close future options for the organization of West European defenses.

The British, in particular, do not want to rule out the possibility of some sort of European defense force. Even the French, not known as supporters of European defense cooperation, have now privately told the US that Schumann's comments last month reflected French concern that a European defense force may not be possible at present, but should not be precluded in the future. It remains to be seen whether in the long run all the allied governments will be willing or able to ignore popular pressures to share in the troop cuts.

### Some Big Questions

**French Participation.** Although Paris remains officially disassociated from force reduction talks,

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it has clearly decided that it can no longer afford to remain totally aloof. Schumann's statement that reductions limited to US and Soviet forces might be the lesser evil has heightened speculation that France might be preparing for greater involvement. Pompidou's reaction to Brezhnev's invitation to participate buttresses this impression, suggesting that the Soviet leader's prodding had some effect. Paris may in fact consider joining the talks if there is a successful conclusion to the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe—thereby satisfying the French condition that detente precede, not follow, troop cuts. Moscow may hope that broadening participation in the talks to include some neutrals might induce Paris to take part.

**Nuclear Weapons.** Whether nuclear weapons should be included in mutual force reductions remains a sensitive question. The allies fully expect the Soviets to continue to press in SALT for the reduction of US forward-based nuclear systems in Europe—short-range missiles, aircraft, and the nuclear weapons they carry. Most of the allies would prefer that these systems not be a topic for East-West negotiation at all.

There also are any number of views beyond this initial preference. The French, for example, say that they strongly prefer that any discussions of tactical nuclear weapons take place in SALT rather than in the force reduction talks. Some allies would countenance trade-offs of Western tactical nuclear weapons and their delivery systems for Warsaw Pact tanks or Soviet medium-range ballistic missiles aimed at Europe. The Dutch think that, if the Soviets propose to deal with tactical nuclear weapons in force reduction talks, the West should expand the area of reductions so that Soviet medium-range ballistic missiles in the western military districts of the Soviet Union are included.

The initial talks will steer clear of the nuclear nettle. It will, nevertheless, remain one of the more intriguing and controversial possibilities for the allies to consider when they resume preparations for the negotiations. It could, in fact, determine whether a mixed-package deal with the West will be possible. A number of allied spokesmen have already urged that NATO soon focus more closely on the nuclear question.

**Outlook for the Initial Talks**

The initial talks have opened accompanied by much confusion over who should participate. If the Soviet proposal to invite "all interested states" was designed to discourage linkage between force reduction talks and the security conference, pacify the Romanians, and encourage French participation, then it is not likely to be a major stumbling block. Bargaining would get much tougher, however, if the Soviets were to try to broaden the scope of negotiations beyond Central Europe to include the Balkans, the Mediterranean, or the northern flanks.

Although national variations may eventually surface among Warsaw Pact governments, the East—with the possible exception of Romania—will undoubtedly present a well-coordinated front. This will contrast with the already apparent independent Western views; the discrepancy between East and West could have the effect of encouraging the NATO allies to stick together. This will be difficult since the varying perspectives within NATO represent strongly held national positions and different approaches to force reductions. Nevertheless, having argued hard within NATO, the allies probably will be judicious in what they say to the Soviets during the initial talks. The allies will certainly advance some of their preferred approaches to mutual force reductions, but will not push hard. The British, for example, have backed off from their stated intention to advocate their own positions. They now imply that they will merely indicate their preference for a phased approach to reductions without going into excessive detail or argumentation.

The ability of the allies to remain reasonably unified when confronting the East in multilateral negotiations has already passed an important test in the first round of security conference talks in Helsinki. While most of the allies will hesitate to expose NATO's dirty linen to Moscow, they will continue to urge that mutual force reductions remain an affair of the whole alliance, and they will continue to insist that the US be willing to place its ideas before NATO prior to trying them out on the Soviets.

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# *WEEKLY SUMMARY*

## *Special Report*

*Sudan: In Search of Stability*

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No. 0355/73B

# SUDAN
## in search of stability

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On 19 July 1971, elements of the presidential guard and an infantry division led by Hashim al-Atta, a pro-Communist army major, overthrew the government of Major General Jafar Numayri. Moving with precision, the coup forces arrested Numayri—the head of the Revolutionary Command Council—and several other council members and army officers and captured most of the key points in Khartoum in less than an hour. Later, Numayri claimed that the Sudanese Communist Party engineered the coup. This has not been definitely established, but party leaders, who had been increasingly at odds with the general, quickly threw in with the rebels. The decision proved fatal for many Communists. Three days after the putsch, on 22 July, paratroop and armored units loyal to Numayri and hostile to the Communists toppled the coup regime. In retaliation for the murder of 38 army officers by the rebels, Major al-Atta was tried and summarily executed, the Sudanese Communist Party chief and two central committee members were hanged, and several thousand other Communists were killed or jailed. Riding a ground swell of popular relief over the collapse of the pro-Communists, General Numayri was back in power.

The July coup and countercoup marked the end of one chapter of modern Sudanese history and the beginning of another. Numayri and the young leftist army officers who had seized power in the "May revolution" of 1969 had been militantly pan-Arab and anti-West, particularly anti-US because of Washington's close ties with Israel. Since the abortive al-Atta coup, the pendulum has swung the other way. The complexion of the Numayri government has changed markedly. It has become more pragmatic and less concerned with radical ideology and Arab affairs. Although it continues, for example, to pay lip service to its socialist revolution, Numayri has scrapped most of the radical economic measures. Khartoum has also moderated its foreign policy in an effort to broaden Sudan's sources of economic aid. Some of these trends were evident before the coup. They may even have helped provoke it, but the countercoup gave Numayri a freer hand to change course.

**Numayri (center) with Qadhafi and Nasir**
*Pan-Arab Days, 1970*

The events of July 1971 also radically altered the balance of political power in Khartoum. Until then, the Sudanese Communist Party, with up to 10,000 members the largest Communist party in Africa and the Arab world, had been the main pillar of support for the May revolution. In the wake of the countercoup, the party lay battered and broken; it was forced to go underground. Numayri himself emerged from the crisis much stronger than before although still dependent on the army. Having shed his Communist collaborators, the general found wider acceptance among moderates and conservatives in the country's largely Arab, Muslim north. Equally important, the purge of the Communists and Numayri's disenchantment with pan-Arabism helped pave the way for the reconciliation in March 1972 between Khartoum and the rebellious south, ending 17 years of virtual civil war.

### The May Revolution and the Communists

From May 1969 until July 1971 the Numayri government careened erratically along a leftward course. Numayri and his fellow officers had promised to unite the people, to relieve the country's serious economic ills, and to strengthen Sudan's ties with radical Arab and socialist states. They accomplished little. By mid-1971, the



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economy was in worse shape than ever before. Much-touted aid from the Soviet Union and other East European Communist states had proved disappointing and inadequate. Instead of peace, the fighting in the south ground on and seemed likely to go on indefinitely. Indeed, the country appeared more divided than ever politically. Not only were southerners and once powerful traditionalist forces in the north still at odds with the government, but some of its former supporters were about to lunge at its jugular.

Given the divergent forces that supported the May revolution, this seems hardly surprising. The Revolutionary Command Council and the Council of Ministers it set up to handle day-to-day affairs were composed of a hodgepodge of Sudanese nationalists, pan-Arabists, Communists, and socialists. They could agree on little beyond scrapping the weak and corrupt parliamentary system and reorienting Sudan to the left.

Nothing sheds more light on this patchwork than the relationship between the Sudanese Communist Party and the revolutionary council. Immediately after the 1969 coup, the council suppressed the traditionalist-oriented political parties and turned to the Communists for support. Although a group of "national" Communists accepted cabinet posts, Abd al-Khaliq Mahjub, the party secretary general and leader of its majority orthodox wing, opposed linking the party's fortunes too closely with the new government. In his eyes the May revolution was essentially bourgeois and nationalist in character. He was right, since most of the council members were ardent admirers of the foremost exponent of Arab nationalism, Egypt's Gamal Abdul Nasir.

As long as the party's interests coincided with those of the regime, Mahjub was willing to cooperate tacitly. At the same time, however, he strove to drive the regime to the left, to encourage closer ties with the Soviet Union, and above all, to increase the influence of the orthodox wing within the government. Inevitably these efforts brought Mahjub into conflict with Numayri and all but the most radical members of the revolutionary council. The Communist-dominated labor unions opposed some of the government's austerity measures. Mahjub strongly opposed Numayri's plans to establish a united front with Libya and Egypt. The Sudanese party chief had little use for Libya's anti-Communist leaders and cared even less for President Nasir, who had used the Egyptian Communist Party for his own ends and then ruthlessly destroyed it. As long as the council felt threatened from the right, however, Numayri needed the Communists. He was well aware that the party, with its supporters among students and labor and even in the army, could be a dangerous opponent.

The most immediate threat from the right was posed by Iman al-Hadi Abd al-Mahdi, the spiritual and political leader of three million Ansar tribesmen. After the May coup the Iman withdrew to his Aba Island stronghold south of Khartoum where he was a symbol and constant reminder to the regime that its authority was less than complete. A showdown with the Iman would have entailed a calculated risk because Ansar made up two fifths of the army. Consequently, the council decided to leave al-Mahdi

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Special Report

alone, at least until it felt more securely in control. The standoff lasted until March 1970 when al-Mahdi launched an ill-fated rebellion, which government forces quickly put down. If the Iman had expected Ansar troops to join his revolt, he sadly miscalculated. The error cost him his life.

With the threat from the right crushed, the nationalist and pro-Egyptian factions in the revolutionary council and officer corps began to apply increasing pressure on Numayri to rid the government of the Communists. Threading his way through the competing factions, Numayri tried to bolster his own less than secure position while avoiding an open split. Both to appease the army and help his "national" Communist allies, he exiled the Communist leader, Mahjub, to Egypt shortly after the Ansar uprising. He also went out of his way to stress the primacy of the armed forces and the "Sudanese" character of the May revolution. To please the pro-Egyptian faction and to obtain financial help from Libya, he backed the idea of a federation with Libya and Egypt, even though there was little public enthusiasm for a union with the Egyptians who are not very popular in the Sudan.

Virtually paralyzed at times by infighting, the revolutionary council stumbled along, unable to come to grips with the country's economic problems or to gain a decisive military edge over the southern insurgents. Finally, even the facade of unity broke down in mid-November 1970 when Numayri dismissed three of his colleagues (including Major al-Atta) from the council. At the same time, he rearrested Mahjub, who had been allowed to return in June, pensioned off several pro-Communist army officers, and expropriated a firm that handled the Communist Party's funds.

Ostensibly, the split occurred over the federation issue, but actually it reflected the deepening feud between Numayri and the orthodox Communists. After November, Numayri began to move cautiously toward the center to broaden his political base. Only a last-minute threat by Moscow to withdraw all Soviet aid prevented the general from publicly breaking with the Communists in April 1971. Then, in May, he boldly dissolved the party's auxiliary organizations and ordered his labor minister to reshape the Communist-controlled labor unions under non-Communist leadership. Less than two months later, al-Atta and his co-conspirators struck back.

### The Soviets and the July Coup

Although Moscow quickly swung its diplomatic support behind al-Atta, the Soviets probably were not directly involved in the July coup. Some Soviet officials—concerned chiefly with the Soviet Union's position elsewhere in the Middle East—had at one time expressed unhappiness with Mahjub's doctrinaire attitude toward the Numayri government. Nevertheless, Moscow reacted vehemently to Mahjub's execution and the Communist witch hunt which followed. Only the Soviets' concern over their prestige in the Arab world and Numayri's own awareness of his heavy dependence on Soviet military and economic aid kept tensions from reaching the breaking point. As it was, Numayri recalled his ambassador from Moscow and expelled the Soviet deputy chief of mission. The Russian ambassador—the only foreign diplomat to call on al-Atta after the coup—left Khartoum under a cloud in mid-August.

Numayri began to phase out the several hundred Soviet military and economic advisers and technicians Moscow had provided and to seek alternative sources of aid. The general had actually been unhappy with Communist assistance for some time, particularly with the bilateral trade agreements he had concluded with the Soviet Union and its East European allies. Numayri did relent and agreed to accept a new Soviet ambassador last September. The Soviets have promised to supply spare parts for arms and equipment and to complete two medical projects. Still, the events of July 1971 are fresh in Numayri's mind, so his relations with Moscow are unlikely to rise much above their present cool and correct level.

Other Communist states have strengthened their ties with Khartoum in the wake of the Soviet-Sudanese difficulties. Yugoslavia and Romania, for example, are on excellent terms